

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Geddes School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003**

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 16, 2003

Date of Report: October 30, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left not addressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

- Data sources used:
- Comprehensive Plan
- Process and Procedure Manual
- Surveys

- Information on home school children
- State Data/Tables
- Student progress data
- TAT documentation
- Referral form
- IEPs
- File reviews
- SIMS

Promising Practices

The steering committee concluded a promising practice for the district is the use of teacher assistance teams as part of the pre-referral process.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined the following areas meet requirements:

- The child find system includes all children residing in the district and a person responsible for coordinating the child find system;
- The district's public awareness program informs parents of child find activities;
- All data collected from child find activities are reviewed. The local cooperative works with the district and assists in the identification of students with disabilities;
- The district did not have any initial evaluation referrals in the past year;
- No students are placed out of district. The comprehensive plan meets the requirements for students placed by the school district in private schools;
- The district meets all requirements in the area of improving results through performance goals and indicators;
- No students have been suspended or expelled. The district's comprehensive plan addresses the requirements for suspension and expulsion;
- The district recruits and hires certified teachers and paraprofessionals. The district has policies and procedures for the supervision and evaluation of these employees; and,
- Staff is included in the analysis of a student's performance on assessments. This helps drive ongoing development and necessary training.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The monitoring team agreed with the steering committee that the inclusion of teacher assistance teams as part of the pre-referral process is a promising practice.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated the steering committee's conclusion that the district meets the requirements under the area of general supervision.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive Plan
- Child Count
- Surveys
- State Data/Tables
- Student progress data
- IEPs
- File reviews
- SIMS
- Age at referral/number of referrals not resulting in evaluations
- Number of preschool age students screened
- School age attendance data
- Board policies

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special educational monitoring demonstrates the school district provides a free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated the district meets the regulations for the provision of a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Prior notice
- Teacher file reviews
- Telephone log
- Evaluation report
- Exit and re-entry into special education
- Number of placement committee overrides
- Surveys
- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive plan
- Personnel with designated certification
- State data tables
- TAT information
- Initial referral
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Permission to evaluate forms
- SIMs
- Evaluation reports
- IEPs
- Progress reports
- Report cards

Meets Requirements

According to file reviews, surveys and adherence to federal, state and local policies, the steering committee concluded the district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parents.

Out of Compliance

The steering committee found in two of three student files that behavior tests were given, which were not listed on the prior notice/consent document for evaluation. In two of three files, functional assessments were not done to determine the students' present levels of performance. In addition, the steering committee concluded that parent input into the re-evaluation process was not documented in two of three student files.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Through file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team validated the steering committee's finding that the district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parents.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:24:04 Evaluation Procedures

ARSD 24:05:30:04 Prior notice and parent consent

A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents, that may assist in determining:

- (a) Whether the child is a child with a disability; and
- (b) The content of the child's IEP, including information related to enabling the child:

- (i) To be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; or
- (ii) For a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities.

The monitoring team validated the steering committee's out of compliance findings for appropriate evaluation requirements. The team found in two of three student files behavior tests were given, which were not listed on the prior notice/consent document for evaluation. Through file reviews, the team concluded functional assessments were not completed to determine two of three students' present levels of performance. The monitoring team also found that parent input into the re-evaluation process was not documented in two of three student files.

In addition, the monitoring team identified the following area as out of compliance;

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

Trained personnel must administer evaluations. Upon reviewing two files and in an interview, the monitoring team found the special education teacher administered the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT). The WIAT manual states that only individuals with graduate level training are qualified to administer the WIAT. The special education teacher does not have graduate level training.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Handbook
- State tables
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure
- File reviews

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the school district insures notification to parents of their rights. The district has policies in place insuring parents fully understand what activity consent is being sought. The steering committee determined the district has policies in place for surrogate parents. All parents in the district have the right to inspect their child's files and to have copies made for them free of charge. In addition, the steering committee concluded the district has policies in place to address compliant procedures and due process hearings.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Through file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team validated the district meets the requirements under the area of procedural safeguards.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State forms
- Comprehensive Plan
- Budget information
- Surveys
- File reviews

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the district insures the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership. All students at or before the age of 14 are invited to the IEP meetings, as well as others to the discretion of the parents. The steering committee determined the district has policies and procedures in place to insure the IEPs are implemented immediately after the meeting for each eligible student.

Out of Compliance

The steering committee concluded the school needs to provide written notice five days prior to an IEP meeting. They also concluded the district needs to do the following to insure the IEP contains all required content: link goals to the present levels of performance; write measurable/observable annual goals; write measurable short term objectives that include the conditions, performance and criteria; make sure progress reports are provided at all reporting times; and, not use “as needed” statements for modifications.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Based on interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team agreed with the steering committee’s conclusions for the Individualized Education Program requirements.

In a review of files and interviews, the monitoring team could not validate the steering committee’s out-of compliance conclusion that parents of disabled children are not informed of their child’s progress at least as often as parents of non-disabled children are informed. The

monitoring found progress reports are sent to parents of disabled children when report cards are sent to parents of non-disabled children.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01:03 Content of Individualized Education Plan

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based on the skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance should be a reflection of the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation. In two of three student's IEPs, the team found the present levels of performance addressed the student's strengths, difficulties and areas to be addressed based on standardized test information, parent input and teachers' reports. Functional assessments were not done; therefore, the student's present levels of performance were not linked to functional academic assessment information.

The annual goals were based on the student's present levels of performance. The special education teacher writes benchmarks; therefore, the annual goals must be measurable and include conditions and criteria. In two of three files reviewed, the goals did not meet these requirements; for example, "...will demonstrate pre-algebra skills to pass the ... grade with 70% accuracy".

Benchmarks are a series of "developmental milestones" that lead to the mastery of an annual goal. The benchmarks seen in two of three student's IEPs were a heading from a textbook chapter with vertical lists below pertaining to chapter lessons. The student's benchmarks for the pre-algebra goal was six pages in length. Objectives or benchmarks must be individualized and provide a breakdown of the goal into smaller, manageable learning tasks that the student needs to learn to master the skill. The benchmarks from the textbook and chapter lessons were inappropriate, because they were not individualized. In addition, the monitoring team determined the benchmarks were so lengthy that the student might not master the goal within a year.

ARSD 24:05:27:01 (6) Content of IEP

Each student's individualized education program shall include a statement of the program modifications and/or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child. If checked, the modification and/or support must be provided to the student. A modification cannot be provided "as needed" due to the ambiguity of the terminology. Through review of files, the monitoring team validated the steering committee's finding that some modifications in two of three student files have "as needed" statements. Note taking assistance, for example, was found by the monitoring team to be "as needed".

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

State tables

File reviews

Surveys

Comprehensive plan

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the district has policies in place for addressing the least restrictive environment for students.

Validation Results**Meets Requirements**

Through interviews, file reviews and classroom observations, the monitoring team validated the district meets the least restrictive environment requirements for children in need of special education and related services.

A monitor observed students' with disabilities in two regular education classes. The students' were participating in small group activities with their teacher providing assistance when needed. This demonstrates the least restrictive environment requirement that a child is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum.